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Culture Corner

Old Phuket Town Walking Trails

A journey into Phuket Town's past begins with a walk — one that encompasses treasures easily missed from the back seat of a taxi. This isn't a strenuous stroll — about 2km, however a real cultural delight. Let the MAP guide you along for historic buildings, shops, eateries and special places.

Follow the trail starting at the Welcome Center (under construction, previously the Police Station) **M** (Intersection Phang Nga and Phuket roads). Facing south, walk the block and around the corner onto Rasada Road. Follow it up to Suriyadee Fountain **O** past the award-winning Bank of Ayudhaya, Sino-Colonial building (on left) **N**. Continuing straight up on Ranong Road takes you through the Fresh Market which is now under construction. Turn left at Soi Phutorn to Pud Jow Shrine **F** and Jui Tui Shrine **G**.


You may choose to loop around from the Suriyadee Fountain onto Yaowarat Road, instead. Decide if you will go straight along or right onto Phang Nga Road. If you look carefully on Phang Nga's north side, about 50m from the corner of Yaowarat Road T-junction, you should spot a small archway indicating a Chinese shrine (some folks have lived here for years and missed this treat). Walk up the narrow soi (lane) and behold the Shrine of Serene Light **H**. There is a surprise here! See details on the map.

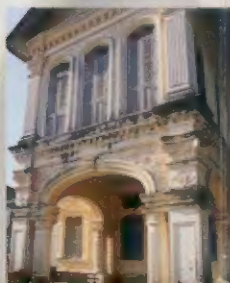
Further on Phang Nga, note the historic On On Hotel **R** where the opening scenes of the movie, The Beach were filmed. One street north running parallel to Phang Nga road, Thalang Road **U** is a splendid example of Sino-Colonial architecture, dating back to early 20th century. As you pass, take a moment to appreciate the flavour of old Phuket. See if you can spot some of the actual architectural characteristics listed on this map. You will see also — or perhaps first smell — Guan Choon Tong, an established Chinese herbal medicine shop **W**.

Soi Romanee, Satun, Ranong, Dibuk, Yaowarat roads and up Rang Hill all add their own charm to beloved Phuket Town. On Krabi Road find two grand mansions **A&B**.

Phuket Island is a brilliant blend of fine beaches, azure seas and its little known captivating cultural tin-mining history. A walk in 'Old Phuket' Town reflects the diverse past of its multicultural heritage.

Our goal is achieved if you take home only a richer understanding of this Sino past and a few new tangible treasures, of course!

See the MAP for this symbol.  This will guide you to some of the 'HOT SPOTS for HOT SHOTS'.



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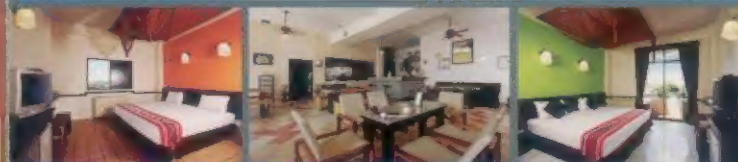
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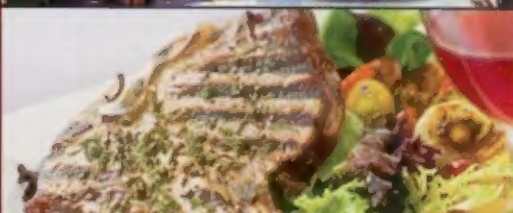
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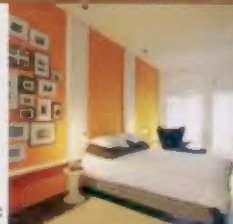
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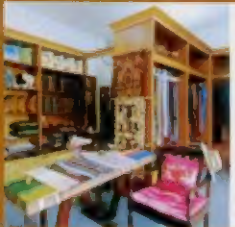
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Rimtang

Find very local food products at this well-known shop. Package up cashew nuts mixed with dried fish and kaffir lime leaves (great with beer), or choose their famous chao kuay (Chinese vegetable, black jelly) and other delicacies. Open Monday to Saturday 08.00 to 20.00 and Sunday 08.00 to 18.00 hours.

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6c



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Statues of Kunying Jan and Thao Sri Sunton (Mook) known as the *Heroines Monument*, is host to many locals who pay their respects to their admirable ancestors.

As the island's governor had just passed away, organising Phuket's defence against the Burmese invasion in 1785 was conducted by his widow, Kunying Jan. With her sister, Mook's help, they assembled what forces they had, then cleverly disguised local women as male soldiers, thus appearing to increase Phuket's military manpower.

After a month's siege, the Burmese tired, lost heart and left. King Rama I awarded Kunying Jan with the royal title of *Thao Thep Kasattri*.



Thalang National Museum In 1985, on the 200th anniversary of the Thalang War, the Thalang National Museum was established. The museum is a monument honouring two courageous women, *Kunying Jan* and *Thao Sri Sunton* (see Heroines Monument). In addition, it is a storehouse of history, archaeology and culture of Phuket Province and its surrounds.

Kathu Mining Museum. Opening later this year, however pre-viewing by appointment. Tel: 076 321 073, Fax: 076 322 126 Email: museum@kathu.com www.kathu.com

Junk Ceylon. In the third century A.D., Ptolemy, a Greek geographer, referred to Phuket as *Jang Si Lang* - which later became *Junk Ceylon*. This name appears on ancient maps of Thailand or Siam.

Phuket Province
Junk Ceylon (Phuket)



PHUKET TOWN'S SINO-COLONIAL PAST

During the 19th century, Hokkien Chinese immigrants arrived in Phuket following new opportunities in tin-mining. Phuket was an important trade centre for Indian, Malay, Arab and European traders who exchanged goods from the rest of the world for tin and rubber.

A Phra Phitak Chyn Pracha Mansion

■ Krabi Road. The owner, a Phuket born Chinese man (the mansion is named for him) owned many tin mines in the early 20th century heyday. This grand angkor lao (foreign mansion) has been uninhabited for many years. Bearing the lucky #9, this estate, during the days of King Rama V and VI, was used as a meeting place. Although a private property, you can walk by the gate and view the surreal setting. Note the Doric styling in the three sets of archways.



Thai Hua Museum

Built in 1911 (2454) and known as Hua Boon School and Shrine - a Chinese Language School of the highest levels. In 1946 (2489), the name changed to Phuket Jung Hua School and again in 1948 to Thai Hua School. A second storey was built in 1934 (2477). Notice the three archways with Ionic and Corinthian detailing. The walls feature the Renaissance period, while the window frames are Roman styling. Bat motifs, a symbol of goodness are stucco aspects in the outer ceilings.

Promthep Clock Tower

(Promthep Information Center)

Built during WWI, 1914 (2457), the clock tower towered as a four storey structure without a clock for 62 years. The original clock brought from Europe never made it due to the ship sinking. A clock finally arrived in 1976, through Lion's Club Phuket donations. Notice the roof resembles an old style police cap.



Architectural Features

Haling from southern China, Hokkien immigrants brought the distinctive row house or shop house architectural styling with them changing the face of Phuket Town.



The row houses, long and narrow, combined Chinese influences with features of the European Classic and Roman periods, producing a new style of buildings in peninsular Siam.

Known as Sino-European or Sino-Colonial styling, molded lime patterns, wooden inlaid doors with Chinese characters share with European designs of Corinthian columns or Doric decoration.

Now, over a century post Chinese migration, when tin-mining made many wealthy merchants, revitalization of the town's spirit is shaping a new era. Revival of Phuket's Soul! The renaissance speaks of beloved, distinctive characteristics.



The Dragon Within. Notice that many building fronts resemble a Dragon's face. The eyes - big side windows, while the door becomes the mouth and eyebrows are the smaller shaped, higher set windows.

Ngoh-Kaa-Kee

As a strong feature of the unique Sino-Colonial architecture, 'the five-foot way', arcade or ngoh-kaa-kee is the high roof covered, curved archway that cleverly joins one shop house to the next. This walkway allows the visitor to browse many adjoining shops without exposure to the weather. You may spot some archways that have been closed in and others, under municipal conservation programs, voluntarily being re-opened.



Words From the Publisher

Special thanks to:

Dr.Yongtanit Pimonsathean, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Thammasat University, Bangkok; advisor of historical buildings and author of many articles for UNESCO, numerous other publications and of the valuable booklet, *OLD PHUKET TOWN TRAIL*; Ping Amranand, author of *ANDAMAN STYLE, Art & Design in Peninsular Siam*

Cover:

Ngoh-Kaa-Kee or the 'five-foot way', the curved archway is a distinctive feature of Sino-Colonial architecture. Spun bamboo Christmas tree adds a cross-cultural appeal. Hand-crafted with over 2,600 twinkling lights by Orient Design Image, Chiang Mai.

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